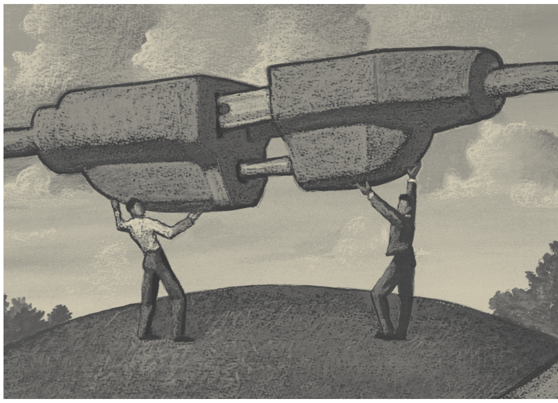
Making the Connection

Leadership Skills and Emotional Intelligence

There is growing evidence that the range of abilities that constitutes what is now commonly known as emotional intelligence plays a key role in determining success in life and in the workplace. Recent CCL research has uncovered links between specific elements of emotional intelligence and specific behaviors associated with leadership effectiveness and ineffectiveness.



Stuart is a senior manager at a well-known pharmaceutical company. He is brilliant, and everyone who knows him believes he has the potential to achieve great things. His primary strength is strategic thinking; colleagues say he has an uncanny ability to predict and plan for the future. As Stuart has advanced in the organization, however, his dark side has become increasingly apparent: he often lashes out at people, and he is unable to build relationships based on trust. Stuart knows he is intelligent and tends to use that knowledge to belittle or demean his co-workers. Realizing that Stuart has extraordinary skills and much to offer the company in terms of vision and strategy, some of his colleagues have tried to help him work past his flaws. But they're beginning to conclude that it's a hopeless cause; Stuart stubbornly refuses to change his style, and his arrogant modus operandi has offended so many people that Stuart's career may no longer be salvageable.

Every company probably has someone like Stuart—a senior manager whose IQ approaches the genius level but who seems clueless when it comes to dealing with other people. These types of managers may be prone to getting angry easily and verbally attacking co-workers, often come across as lacking compassion and empathy, and usually find it difficult to get others to cooperate with them and their agendas. The Stuarts of the world make you wonder how people so smart can be so incapable of understanding themselves and others.

by Marian N. Ruderman, Kelly Hannum, Jean Brittain Leslie, and Judith L. Steed

What Stuart is lacking is *emotional intelligence.* There may be little hope of salvaging Stuart's career, but there is good news for managers who are similarly deficient in emotional intelligence capacities but willing to try to change their ways: emotional intelligence can be developed and enhanced.

DEALING WITH EMOTIONS

In articles published in 1990, psychologists Jack Mayer of the University of New Hampshire and Peter Salovey of Yale University coined the term *emotional intelligence,* referring to the constellation of abilities through which people deal with their own emotions and those of others. Mayer and Salovey later went on to define emotional intelligence as the ability to perceive emotional information and use it to guide thought and actions; they distinguished it from cognitive intelligence, which is what determines whether people will be successful in school and is measured through IQ tests.

The concept of emotional intelligence was popularized by psychologist Daniel Goleman in his books *Emotional Intelligence* and *Working with Emotional Intelligence,* among other writings. Goleman broadened the notion of emotional intelligence to include an array of noncognitive abilities that help people adapt to all aspects of life. He focused on four basic competencies—self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, and social skills—that influence the way people handle themselves and their relationships with others. He argued that these human competencies play a bigger role than cognitive intelligence in determining success in life and in the workplace.

Mayer, Salovey, and Goleman were not the first to recognize the significance of the attributes now collectively called emotional intelligence. For years before, managers, educators, human resource professionals, and others had seen evidence that these attributes—known then by more generic, colloquial terms such as *people skills*—seemed to play an important role in separating the average from the first-rate performers. Like Goleman, many of these observers believed these skills were more important than intellect or technical skills in determining success.

Throughout CCL's more than thirty-year history, one of its primary approaches to leadership development has been to help managers and executives to understand themselves and others better, to increase their self-awareness, self-management, and interpersonal skills—in other words, to expand their emotional intelligence, although CCL has not used that term. CCL has done this through a range of programs, simulations, publications, and tools—including Benchmarks®, a 360-degree assessment instrument that measures leaders' strengths and development needs as compared with those of other leaders. Although CCL and others have long believed that people's levels of emotional competency are related to their effectiveness as leaders, little had been done to scientifically examine and document whether specific elements of emotional intelligence are linked to specific behaviors associated with leadership effectiveness and ineffectiveness—and if they are, how they are linked. With this goal, CCL designed and conducted a study that correlated Benchmarks results with scores from an assessment instrument through which people gauge their own emotional intelligence abilities (see the sidebar on page 5). Although the findings are not sufficient to state conclusively that leaders with high levels of emotional intelligence are better leaders, they do show that there are clear and basic connections between the higher ranges of emotional intelligence and the possession of skills and abilities associated with leadership excellence. Knowing and understanding these connections can give managers and executives additional ammunition in their efforts to enhance their leadership performance.

STRONGEST LINKS

The study comparing Benchmarks results with scores from the BarOn Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i™), an assessment of emotional intelligence, found that ten of the sixteen skills and perspectives assessed by Benchmarks were strongly associated with one or more emotional intelli-

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Marian N. Ruderman is a research scientist at CCL in Greensboro. She holds a Ph.D. degree from the University of Michigan.



Kelly Hannum is a research associate at CCL in Greensboro. She holds an M.Ed. degree from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.



Jean Brittain Leslie is manager of product research at CCL in Greensboro. She holds an M.A. degree from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.



Judith L. Steed is a research associate at CCL in Colorado Springs. She holds an M.S. degree from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.



gence measures. In other words, higher levels of certain emotional intelligence components appear to be connected to better performance in those ten areas. Benchmarks is also designed to identify potential problem areas that can contribute to derailment, which occurs when a manager who has previously been seen as successful and full of potential for continued advancement is instead fired, demoted, or held on a career plateau. Associations were also found between two of these career-threatening flaws and certain aspects of emotional intelligence.

Let's look first at the connections between emotional intelligence and leadership skills and perspectives:

Participative management. Of all the skills and perspectives measured by Benchmarks, participative management had the highest number of meaningful correlations with measures of emotional intelligence. The essence of participative management is getting buy-in from colleagues at the beginning of an initiative by involving them, engaging them through listening and communicating, influencing them in the decision-making process, and building consensus. It is an important relationship-building skill, especially in today's management environment, in which organizations value interdependency within and between groups. Depending on the Benchmarks rater (boss, peer, or direct report), scores in participative management were related to the emotional intelligence abilities of social responsibility (being a cooperative, contributing, and constructive member of one's social group), happiness (feeling satisfied with and deriving pleasure from life), interpersonal relationship (establishing and maintaining mutually satisfying relationships), impulse control (resisting impulsive behavior), emotional self-awareness (being in touch with one's own feelings), and empathy (understanding and appreciating the feelings of others). These correlations suggest that managers who are perceived as being skilled at listening to others and gaining their input before implementing change are likely also to see themselves as satisfied with life and good at cooperating, fostering relationships, controlling impulses, and understanding their own and others' emotions.

Putting people at ease. People who are warm and have a good sense of humor are often able to make others feel at ease, relaxed, and comfortable in their presence. The connections between this skill and emotional intelligence qualities also varied according to who did the rating. The assessments by managers' direct reports indicated that the ability to put people at ease was related to impulse control, which suggests that not overreacting in difficult situations and avoiding knee-jerk responses such as quick anger go a long way toward making people feel relaxed. The assessments by bosses indicated that managers' ability to put others at ease was tied to the managers' own sense of happiness, suggesting that a manager's disposition is a determinant of how comfortable people feel in his or her presence.

Self-awareness. Managers who were seen by their bosses, peers, and direct reports as having an accurate picture of their strengths and weaknesses and as being willing to improve gave themselves high ratings on the emotional intelligence abilities of impulse control and stress tolerance (withstanding adverse events and stressful situations without falling apart). This suggests that managers who are aware that they may easily explode into anger or become anxious in the face of difficult situations are likely to be perceived as lacking in self-awareness. The assessments by managers' direct reports indicated that self-awareness is also related to social responsibility.

Balance between personal life and work. Managers who had demonstrated to their bosses that they were adept at balancing their work priorities with their personal lives so that neither was neglected gave them-

Weighing the Evidence

To explore whether specific behaviors associated with leadership effectiveness are connected to particular elements of emotional intelligence, CCL designed and conducted a study in which 302 managers took part. The managers, who were participants in CCL's Leadership Development Program (LDP)®, were assessed through Benchmarks®, a 360-degree feedback instrument that gives managers insights into how their bosses, peers, direct reports, and they themselves perceive their leadership strengths and development needs. The managers also completed the BarOn Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i™), with which people assess themselves on fifteen components of emotional intelligence. The BarOn EQ-i was developed through nineteen years of research conducted around the world by clinical psychologist Reuven Bar-On and is published by Multi-Health Systems of North Tonawanda, New York. The results from Benchmarks and the BarOn EQ-i were correlated to reveal associations between leadership skills, perspectives, and derailment factors and aspects of emotional intelligence.

The senior-level managers in the study averaged just under forty-three years old. Seventy-three percent were male, 81 percent were white, and 90 percent had a minimum of a bachelor's degree.

selves high ratings in the emotional intelligence abilities of social responsibility, impulse control, and empathy. This suggests that if you give your boss the impression that you are a whole person with a well-rounded life, you're more likely to believe in your abilities to contribute to a group, resist impulsive actions, and understand the emotions of others. Ratings on work-life balance from direct reports were also associated with impulse control.

Straightforwardness and composure. From all rater perspectives, the leadership skills of remaining steadfast and calm during crises, relying on facts, and being able to recover from mistakes were related to impulse control. Direct reports' ratings of their managers' straightforwardness and composure were also associated with stress tolerance, social responsibility, and optimism (the ability to maintain a positive attitude even in the face of adversity), and bosses' ratings of managers' resolve and poise were related to managers' own sense of happiness.

Building and mending relationships. Bosses' assessments of managers' abilities to develop and maintain solid working relationships with people inside and outside their organizations and to negotiate work-related problems without alienating people were linked to impulse control, and direct reports' ratings were associated with stress tolerance. These connections make a lot of sense: managers who are prone to explosive outbursts and an inability to control hostility don't do much to help their relationships with their bosses, and problematic relationships with direct reports often cause stress for managers, or conversely, managers' inability to cope with stress and adversity often results in poor relationships with the people they supervise.

Doing whatever it takes. The leadership abilities of being perseverant and staying focused in the face of obstacles, of being action oriented and taking charge, and of taking a stand on one's own if required and at the same time being open to learning from others were associated by managers' bosses and direct reports with the emotional intelligence component of independence. People who rate themselves highly on independence see themselves as being self-directed and self-controlled in their thinking and actions and as being free of emotional dependency. Additionally, bosses' assessments of managers' ability to do whatever it takes were connected with assertiveness—expressing feelings, beliefs, and thoughts in a constructive way—and direct reports' ratings on this leadership skill were connected with optimism. So it appears that managers who are good at doing whatever it takes are more likely to be self-reliant, autonomous, and persistent and positive, even when they encounter adversity.

Decisiveness. Managers said by their direct reports to prefer quick, unhesitating, and approximate actions over slow and precise moves gave themselves high marks on the emotional intelligence quality of independence. This indicates that managers who characterize themselves as independent thinkers and as being self-directed and self-controlled in their actions are more likely to be seen as decisive by the people who work for them.

Confronting problem employees. Peers' assessments of the degree to which managers were able to deal with difficult workers decisively and fairly were tied to the emotional intelligence measure of assertiveness. This indicates that being able to express one's feelings, beliefs, and thoughts in a constructive way is helpful in handling employees whose performance isn't up to par.

Change management. Direct reports' ratings of their managers' effectiveness at implementing strategies to facilitate organizational change initiatives and overcome resistance to change were connected with the emotional intelligence ability of social responsibility. Peers' assessments of managers' change management skills were linked to the emotional intelligence measure of interpersonal relationship. Thus it appears that managers who are cooperative members of their social groups and who are adept at building and sustaining working relationships characterized by intimacy and affection are likely to also be good at leading change by example, involving others in change initiatives, and adjusting to changing situations.

FAST TRACK TO NOWHERE

The second section of Benchmarks is designed to identify potential problem areas that can contribute to career derailment. The study found associations between two of these career-threatening flaws and certain aspects of emotional intelligence.

Problems with interpersonal relationships. The connections between managers' difficulties in developing good working relations with others and managers' self-assessments of their emotional intelligence abilities were some of the most striking found in the study. From all three rater perspectives, managers who were seen as having problems with interpersonal relationships—a career flaw characterized by insensitivity, arrogance, impatience, authoritarianism, volatility, and other negative traits and behaviors—scored low on the emotional intelligence ability of impulse control. Interpersonal relationship ratings from direct reports and peers were related to stress tolerance, ratings from direct reports were associated with social responsibility, and bosses' assessments were connected with empathy. These results suggest that no matter how strong their intellectual or technical skills, managers who care little about being cooperative and contributing members of their groups, who can't handle pressure, who easily explode and take their frustrations out on others, and who don't understand or appreciate the feelings

of others may be setting themselves up for derailment.

Difficulty changing or adapting. Direct reports' ratings of their managers' resistance to change and ability to learn from mistakes were related to the emotional intelligence measures of stress tolerance and impulse control. A possible explanation for this connection is that managers who have a hard time with change often have a limited comfort zone. When they are forced outside that zone, it sets off anger and resentment, which in turn produces stress.

POINTS TO PONDER

Four principal themes stand out from the relationships found between leadership abilities and emotional intelligence and between derailment characteristics and emotional intelligence:

- As organizations realize that the command-and-control, hierarchical model of leadership is no longer effective, they are increasingly moving toward a more participative management style. It appears that managers can more easily embrace this change and adapt to this style when they have certain emotional intelligence abilities—forming good working relationships, being cooperative and constructive members of a group, controlling anger and other impulses, and in general being pleasant to be around. Co-workers view managers with these characteristics as being effective in the participative style.
- Being centered and grounded is a valuable quality for managers. It's important for managers to give the impression that they are in control of themselves, understand themselves, and know their own strengths and weaknesses. The degree to which managers are perceived as being self-aware, straightforward, and composed and as having balance between their personal and work lives is based largely on how they react under pressure and in difficult situations. If they fall apart or flare up with anger, their leadership abilities are liable to be questioned; if they are imperturbable and resist flying off the handle, their managerial skills are likely to be confirmed.
- A willingness and ability to take action is key to effective leadership. Decisiveness and doing whatever it takes to achieve a goal are associated with independence in thought and actions. Managers who are independent do not ignore the opinions of others but are also not dependent on such input. This self-reliance helps them think strategically, make good decisions, and persevere in the face of obstacles.
- Organizations are placing increased value on interpersonal relationships, and managers who don't handle their emotions well, who lack understanding of themselves and others, and who are abrasive or abusive make others feel uncomfortable. That increases their chances of derailing.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Emotional intelligence can be developed and enhanced, although doing so takes a lot of effort. Managers who are in danger of derailing because of poor interpersonal relationships are particularly good candidates for working on their emotional intelligence. In general, assessment and feedback instruments such as Benchmarks are good ways to begin improving emotional intelligence, followed by goal setting and a developmental experience that may take the form of classroom training, job assignments, simulations, coaching, or learning from a role model. Managers should identify and address any obstacles to their goals, practice new behaviors in a supportive environment, and review and reassess their behavioral changes to help lock in what they have learned.

More specifically, organizations today value managers who can put the needs of the group ahead of their personal needs—in other words, who have the emotional intelligence capacity of social responsibility. One way to develop this ability may be to involve yourself in the community through charities, nonprofit organizations, and other worthy causes. Devoting time and energy to such groups can help you see beyond your own concerns and improve your ability to be a valued member of a group. Another way to develop social responsibility is to review your individual work goals, then consider them from the perspectives of your team and organization. Ask yourself whether your individual goals facilitate and are aligned with the group and organizational goals, and what you can do to contribute positively to the larger goals.

The ability to handle stress is related to a range of leadership skills and derailment factors. Managers who are lacking in these related characteristics may want to consider stress management training. Be careful, however, to choose a program or workshop that is well designed and has a record of good results. Some of the better programs include assessment, feedback, modeling and practice of new skills, and ongoing support to keep people from lapsing back to their old ways.

Finally, the emotional intelligence ability of impulse control was related to ratings on eight Benchmarks scales. The manifestations of poor impulse control—such as aggression, hostility, irresponsibility, and frustration—are highly conspicuous to colleagues, so learning to restrain impulsive behavior can do a lot to improve a manager's interactions at work. If you have problems with impulse control, you might want to consider coaching as a way to develop composure, patience, self-awareness, adaptability, and coolness under fire. A coach can help you pinpoint your hot buttons and learn how to respond more effectively in situations of conflict or adversity.